1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

years, when a surplus of *padi* has been gained, it is exchanged for gongs, which are then available in years of shortage. Each season, some families succeed in producing a surplus, while others find themselves with a deficit; and so, year by year in an area like the Baleh, scores of different families exchange gongs for *padi*, or *padi* for gongs. Jars (*tajau*), though to a much lesser extent, are used in the same way. Again, money—obtained from the marketing of jungle produce—is often used to purchase *padi*; and of recent years, cash crops—particularly rubber—have become increasingly important.

248. It frequently happens, however that a family is not prepared to part with any of its gongs or other property. In these circumstances recourse is had to the traditional scarcity food of the Iban: sago. Most *bilek* families possess small plantations of sago palms, specially planted as a scarcity crop (Plate 5), for no Iban relishes *mulong* (as prepared sago is called), and it is only eaten under duress when *padi* cannot be easily procured. When planted sago is not available, the men set off to scour the jungle for the wild palms, from which the nomadic tribes of Borneo—such as the Punans—habitually obtain the sago which is the main item of their diet.

Rubber as a Cash Crop, and its Relation to Padi Cultivation

249. We have so far been discussing the traditional ways of coping with a *padi* shortage, but to-day, in many parts of the Baleh, the introduction of rubber as a cash crop has drastically changed the situation. As far as I have been able to determine, rubber was first introduced into the Kapit District in 1907 when a prison gang planted some 200 young trees.[1] By 1913, both rubber and cassava were being grown by Iban communities living in the vicinity of Kapit.[2] During the years of disaffection, from 1914-1919, it is probable that little or no rubber was planted in the Baleh region itself, but soon after the Iban were permitted to re-occupy the river, in 1922, planting was resumed. At Rumah Nyala in the Sungai Sut, the first trees to be planted date from about 1924. Some years after this a strange series of events occurred. The story spread, among the Iban, that rubber trees had a strongly deleterious effect on their *padi*; the spirit of the rubber trees (*antu kubal*), so it was said, was able to attack and drive away the *padi* spirits (*antu padi*). Many Iban came to believe this extraordinary tale (which had sprung from a dream), and so deeply that they were persuaded to cut down the rubber trees they had planted. To-day they bewail their stupidity, but because of it, many Iban families in the Baleh region are now without productive rubber plantations.[3]

250. At Rumah Nyala, in 1950, all but four of the twenty-five *bilek* families possessed small rubber plantations. Rubber is prepared for the market in small sheets (*kepin*), and it is convenient therefore, to discuss *bilek* family plantations in terms of the number of sheets which they are capable of yielding when being fully worked. Measurement of some 50 typical *kepin* showed an average weight per sheet of 1·7 katis. (1 kati equals 1 1/3rd lbs.). The family holdings of Rumah Nyala are summarized in Table 23.

[1] "Sarawak Gazette," 1908, p. 13.
[2] "Sarawak Gazette," 1913, p. 118.
[3] This story appears to have had a wide circulation in Sarawak, for it was also encountered by Dr. W. R. Geddes among the Land Dayaks of the First Division.

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban OCb

243 three days in succession until they hear either a note of warning
787 to keep away from it, or a note of encouragement to remain on
it. If the auguries are favourable they proceed to denude the
313 land of its forest. Both sexes share in this labour; the women
and boys clear away the undergrowth and the men fell the
trees. Much valuable timber is then destroyed, as they spare
[227] only such fruit trees as are in full bearing, and those upon
which the bees settle and from which they expect to be able to
gather wild honey. As some of the trees are of enormous
girth being furnished with buttresses, they do not always fell
them at the base, but more often some distance up the trunk:
others they leave standing altogether, merely lopping off the
boughs to feed the fire which is afterwards to lay bare the ground
and manure the soil.

243 When the land has been fully cleared it is left to dry. Sun
313 and wind are now of almost vital consequence to the Dyaks,
372 for if they are unable to thoroughly burn this immense mass of
timber, famine stares them in the face for the year to come. If
783 it pour with rain day after day and week after week, and there
is no promise of continued fine weather, they are apt to imagine
784 that some impurity has defiled the tribe and that the face of the
Great Spirit is hid from them. So the elders of the people get
to work to find it out, and adjudicate on all cases of incest and
bigamy, and purify the earth with the blood of pigs. Prayers
are offered to *Betara* from one end of the country to the other;
for the space of three days the villages are tabued, and all
labour is discontinued; the inhabitants remain at home, and
strangers are not admitted. But if the weather is warm and
dry the farms are ready in a very few days for the burning. They
are set on fire from the windward side when the breeze is blow-
ing, and soon the entire mass is seething with flames. It is a
magnificent spectacle to behold when several of these farms are
ablaze at once, and the hills are flaring like volcanoes. The
heat at this season caused by the universal burning is almost
insupportable; for days not a glimpse is to be caught of the
blue sky overhead; the smoke hangs over the country like
a heavy cloud, and the sun glows through the fog like a globe
of molten copper.

243 When the fire has exhausted itself and the ground is again cool,
which it soon is from the frequency of rain in this country, they
commence to sow the seed. The men traverse the farm with
dibbleys in their hands and dibble the ground; the women follow
and drop in the paddy seed and cover up the holes by scraping
earth into them with their feet. Indian corn (*lingkau*) is planted
sparingly at the same time: and as it is ripe and off the ground
within three months from the date of the sowing, it does not

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

313 The leaves are very thorny, and cling to the trees and branches around. The older part of the cane has no leaves. It is very tough and strong, and in size about one-quarter of an inch in diameter. It is easily split, and used for the seats of chairs, etc.

222 439 Sometimes the Dyaks join others in the collection of edible birds'-nests for the Chinese market. This is a great industry in those parts of Borneo where there are large limestone caves, in which these nests are found. The caves are farmed out by Government, and whatever is obtained over the amount paid to Government is the profit of the workers. In Upper Sarawak certain tribes possess caves in which edible birds'-nests are found, and they divide the nests with the Government.

222 Sometimes Dyaks who wish to earn a little extra money go and help these tribes in collecting birds'-nests, and get a share of the profits, or more often they go to small caves which belong to no one in particular and collect birds'-nests for themselves, and then give a share of what they find to the Government.

Some of the caves in which edible birds'-nests are found are very large. At the entrance the visitor is met by thousands of bats and swallows. The latter resemble the common swallow in appearance, but are only half as large. These small swallows make the edible nests. Inside, the cave is often like an immense amphitheatre roofed like a dome, the middle of which is over a thousand feet high. Thousands of nests are seen clinging to the pillar-like rocky sides and roof. The most flimsy-looking stages of bamboos tied together with cane are the simple means employed by the natives to collect the nests from the seemingly most inaccessible positions. [417]

Though there are rifts in the sides through which come

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

rays of light, still in parts the cave is so dark that lamps and torches have to be used.

The Dyaks climb up the bamboo scaffolding, carrying with them long cane ladders. These are fixed against the sides. Two men work on each ladder, which often hangs high up in the air. One carries a light four-pronged spear about fifteen feet long, and near the prongs a lighted candle is fixed. Holding on to the ladder with one hand, he manages the spear with the other, and transfixes the nest. A slight push detaches it from the rock, and the spear is then held within reach of the second man, who detaches the nest and puts it into a basket tied to his waist.

The natives say that there are two species of swallows that inhabit these caves. Those that take up their abode near the entrance of the cave build nests which are of no value. These birds often attack the other and smaller species which make the edible nests. The natives often destroy the nests of the larger swallows, so as to lessen their number.

The best quality nests are very translucent, and of a pale yellow colour, and mixed with very few feathers. These are nests that have been freshly made. If the nests are not removed, the birds make use of them again, so that by age and accession of dirt they become quite useless. The old nests are of no value, and the natives destroy them, so that the birds may build new ones in their place.

The nests are collected four times a year. The natives say that the birds will lay four times a year if their nests are collected often, but if there are only two collections, then the birds only lay twice in the year. The best time for collecting nests is when the eggs are just laid. One

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

222 would imagine that there would be a danger of over-collecting, and that the number of birds would diminish; but the natives say there is no danger of this, as the birds carry on their breeding in nooks and crannies inaccessible to the collectors.

314 Another jungle industry is the hunting for camphor. The kind the Dyaks obtain is known as "hard camphor," and is found in crystals in the hollow trunk of a tree. It is much more valuable than ordinary camphor.

314 Before going out to collect camphor, the Dyaks live in
787 little huts in the jungle, and listen to the omens of birds,
784 just as they would do before going out gutta-hunting. If the omens be favourable, then they start off, being careful not to use in conversation certain words which are considered "taboo," or *mali*. It is forbidden to use the word "camphor," or to mention the names of the implements used in working it, or of any races, such as the Chinese, Malays, or Europeans, because these will have something to do with the selling of the camphor later on. If the spirits who own the camphor know what the men are after, or that their property is likely to be taken away and sold to distant lands, they will carefully hide it, and the camphor workers will never be able to find it; so the Dyaks have to use other expressions to express the articles whose names must not be mentioned. "Camphor" becomes "the thing that smells," and so on.

314 The Dyaks, as well as the Malays, believe that to be
784 careless and to make use of any forbidden word is sure to result in failure to find camphor. Even if a tree containing camphor is felled, they say that the crystallized camphor will become liquid, and therefore useless.

314 When a camphor-tree is found in the jungle it is chipped

243 their food supply. Gathering of jungle produce is still a relatively
222 important work by which fruits, chicle, fibers and a number of other
314 items are brought to market and sold. The collection of vegetable leaves, shoots and cabbages of a number of different palms provides the principal supplements to the staple of rice. And when rice runs out and there is no money to buy more, the much-disliked scarcity food, sago, can be collected and processed.

226 Fishing is both a leisure activity and a means for catching the most regular and dependable supply of meat in the Iban diet. The Ibans are most adapt at exploiting the rivers and streams along which they live, their techniques depending upon the conditions of the water, the habits of the fish and other aquatic life, and whether they intend to consume the catch personally or to sell it to members of their long-house or in the market. The introduction of fish-ponds has provided a much more dependable source of meat.

224 Hunting provides a diversion from other activities, but game is
244 not plentiful in this District. Gardening is assuming more importance among a number of Ibans, but the inclination is to plant cash crops rather than vegetables for personal consumption.

464 The uncertainty of returns from rice cultivation, together with
243 the orientation of Ibans to a cash economy and to goods which can be
437 purchased with money, has prompted members of every longhouse to seek employment.

243 greater than those of hill-rice, yet each form has its peculiar diffi-
461 culties. Men and women who have spent days cultivating the soil (mito) complain of the intense pain through the chest and shoulders this work brings. Withstanding the elements, sun and rain (laban panas ujan) also
[464] elicits complaints. It should not be surprising, therefore, that many young people - and older ones, too - are disinclined to endure the rigors of farming, which offer relatively small if not uncertain rewards, and look for any opportunity to find other employment wherever it may be obtained.

B. Collecting and Fishing

222 Next to rice cultivation and wage-earning, the next most important
226 forms of Iban adaptation in this District are collecting and fishing. We have discussed the importance of rubber as one of the economic bases of Sibu, but when prices drop, tapping stops. Similarly, attention to pepper gardening varies with the market. Collecting and fishing, however, are generally universal and consistent activities through which the Ibans acquire foodstuffs and marketable goods.

Collecting

Iban adat provides that anyone may eat the fruit of another
222 [671] person's tree at the tree, but it is a violation subject to fine to re-
[432] move or take fruit away from the place. The various species of fruit are gathered in season and sometimes sold to Chinese vendors or, more frequently of late, sold by Iban collectors, either men or women, on the streets.

222 824 The most important fruits commercially include several species of banana (pisang pisang, pisang keling, pisang ambon and pisang mas), plantains (pisang tandok), jackfruit (buah nangka, buah temedak), mango (buah mangga, buah kuini), papaya or pawpaw (buah beti', buah rungan), guava (jambu batu), Malay apple (jambu merah), water apple (jambu ai), mangosteen (buah manggis, buah sikup), oranges (buah limau), pomelo (limau besai), pineapple (buah berunai, nanas), soursop (durian belanda), star fruit buah belimbing), rambutan (buah sibau), and durian (buah rian).[18] The durian deserves especial note because of its incomparable character.[19] [435] The fruit is in great demand and in an off-season, such as during August, 1971, an average size fruit may cost M$ 4 to 5.

314 The chief exploitation of the nipa palm for sugar occurs in the First Division. The Ibans and Malays of the Lower Rejang and Igan Rivers derive income from the manufacture of roofing thatch (attap) from the nipa leaves and coverings (kajang) from the nipa shoots (sumbok). They also manufacture cigarette papers (daun rokok or rokok apong) which, together with the other items, are taken to market when a sufficient quantity has been manufactured.

[231] The sago palm is an important source of fodder for pigs among the Ibans, but has little commercial value to them, as it does among the

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[18] For comprehensive listing, description and scientific names, see Allen, 1967.

[19] An incomparable description of this scatoleous fruit appears in the Encylopedia Brittanica, "Durian."

In addition to the continuous demand of the Ibans themselves for mats and baskets, the former for covering the floors when sitting, for containing the newly harvested rice and for threshing, the latter for containers for seed, harvested rice, fish and jungle produce, among other uses, they also are manufactured for sale in Sibu.[21]

Other jungle produce of commercial value includes a wide variety of vegetables. Ibans living in the Sungai Sunga and Sungai Assan area collect edible ferns each evening and bring the ferns (the most common are paku' and kemiding) bound in pineapple leaves (daun nanas) to market in the early morning. Kangkong, a leafy vegetable not unlike spinach, is plucked and sold regularly. Less regularly, Ibans bring in bamboo shoots (tubu') and the cabbages of several species of palms such as the sago (upa' mulong), upa' pantu', upa' maram, upa' apong, upa' lalis and upa' bindang.

Fishing

Exploitation of aquatic life provides the principal source of protein in the Iban diet. Fish, shrimps and snails are caught or trapped in the numerous streams. Various types of worms and slugs are obtained

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[21] The sale of mats and baskets affords an opportunity for Iban women to visit the Sibu pasar or, occasionally, to travel as far as Sarikei, where they rationalize the prices are better - and the cost of travel thrice that to Sibu! The availability of plastics is being exploited by Iban women who weave brightly colored baskets of plastic and sell them from door to door or to local shops.